

A
Funeral Sermon

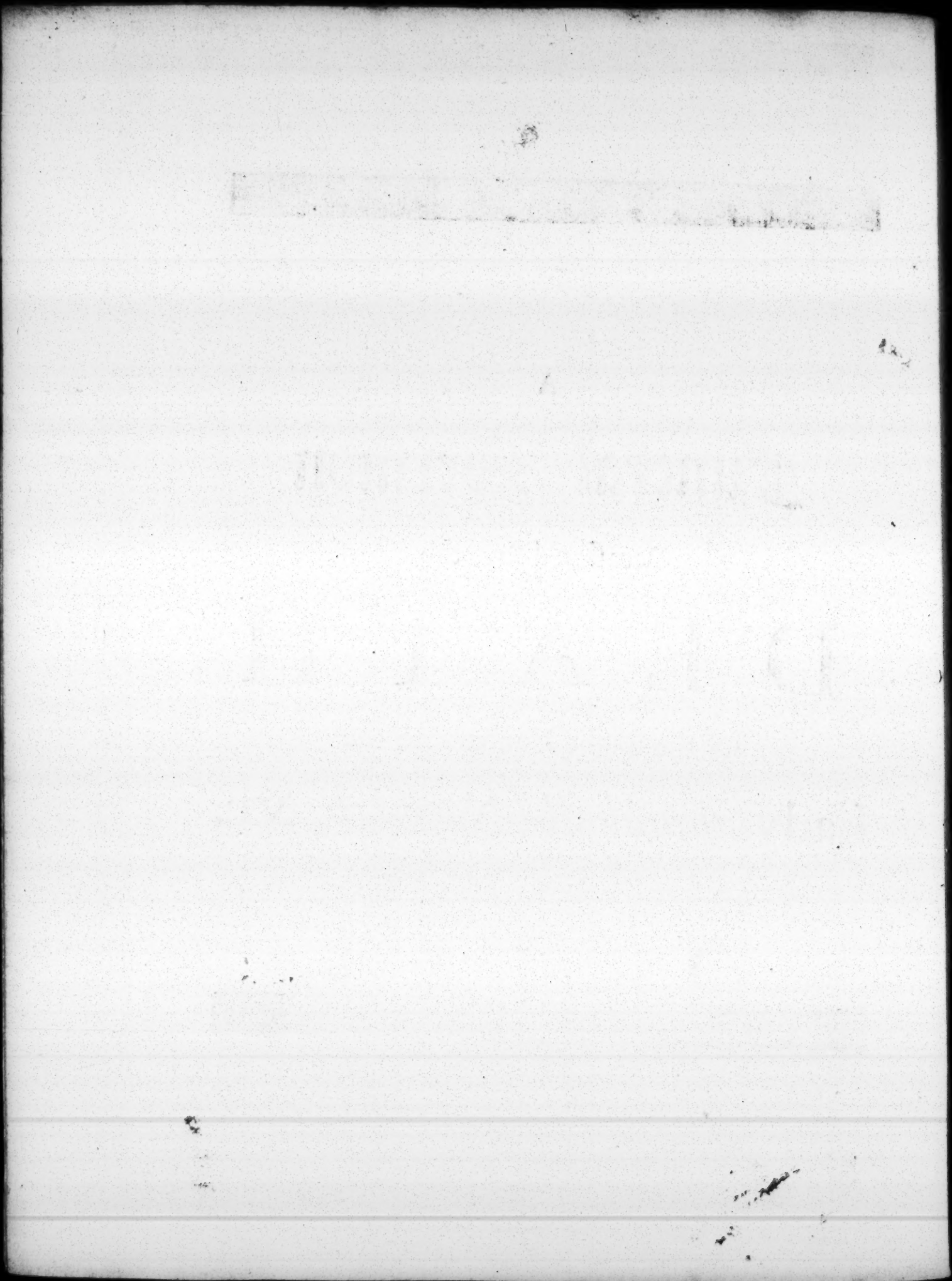
Occasion'd by the

D E A T H

Of the Right Honourable the

Lady Annabella Norwich, &c.

D E A T H



9
The Approach of the Great Night,

IN A
SERMON

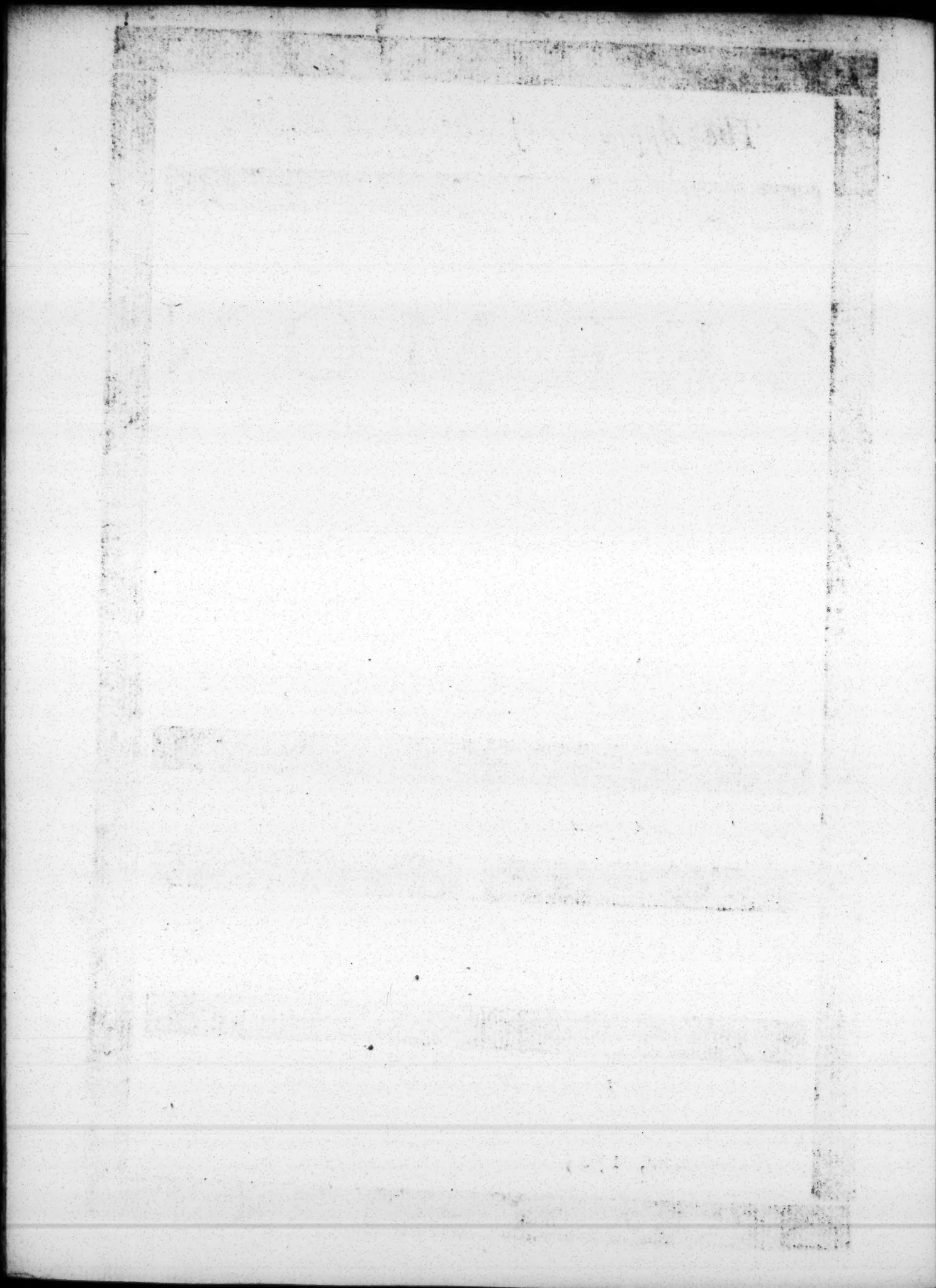
Upon Occasion of the
DEATH and FUNERAL
Of the Right Honourable the
Lady ANNABELLA NORWICH,
Wife of Sir *Erasmus* Norwich, Bar

Preach'd at *Brampton* in *Northamptonshire*, Feb. 7th. 1702.

By SAMUEL BLACKWELL, B. D. Rector
there; formerly of *Lincoln-College* in *Oxford*.
W. H. Kanne

L O N D O N :

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Noster-Row, 1705.



THE
 APPROACH
 OF THE
 GREAT NIGHT.

*St. John 9. 4. the latter part. The Night
 cometh, when no Man can Work.*

GOD Almighty sent us into this World to be Employ'd, and to be Useful in it; and that we may be so, of his Wisdom and Goodness, He hath furnish'd us with Talents and Abilities, which at the same time fit us for Employment, and direct us to it: But, alas! how few answer the end of their Coming, and of the Abilities whereby they are qualified to do so? How many, instead of being like the Tree the Psalmist speaks of, planted by the

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Rivers of water, which bringeth forth his fruit in his season, are like the fruitless Fig-tree, which serv'd only to cumber the Ground; either burden, or disturb the Earth they live on?

Nor is it because we want motives sufficient to persuade us to our Duty; but because we do not duly reflect upon them. There is a Motive in the words I have read, which, if rightly consider'd, could not but have a mighty influence upon us; *The Night cometh when no Man can work.*

At the first Verse of this Chapter we read, that our Saviour, as he passed by, *Saw a Man which was blind from his birth.* The appearance of extraordinary things usually excites to enquiry after the cause of them; and if they be disastrous, harsh censures are frequently passed, and supposals made. Thus 'twas in the present case; *His Disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did Sin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind?* Supposing that so great Suffering must be the effect of some particular Sin. Our Saviour gave them an answer very different from what they seem'd to have expected; an answer which shews how apt we are to misrepresent God's Providence, to misunderstand the design of his inflictions; *Neither hath this Man sinned nor his Parents:*

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Parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him, that is, by the miraculous Cure to be wrought upon him.

Upon this mention of the Works of God, our blessed Lord adds, *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is Day*, and then gives a reason in the words I have proposed, *the Night cometh when no Man can work.*

In Treating of them I intend to consider,

1. *The Night.*
2. *The Approach of it, the Night cometh.*
3. *The Incapacity it puts us under, when no Man can work.*

4thly, and lastly, To offer something for the Improvement of that which shall be deliver'd.

I begin with the *Night*; of which we are decently minded by the Representation of Darkness and Sorrow, which surround us.

The Church & Chancel in Mourning.

Night is variously taken in Holy Scripture, sometimes Properly, sometimes Metaphorically. As it is Metaphorically taken, it sometimes signifies a time of Ignorance and Vice; so in those well known words of St. Paul, Rom. 13. 12. *The Night is far spent, the Day is at hand*; sometimes

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times a time of Affliction, as *Isaiah 26. 9.* *With my Soul I have desired thee in the Night.* In short, here it signifies Death; the *Night*, that is, *Death Cometh.*

How fitly Death may be compared to, or represented by Night, will appear, if we consider the following particulars.

1. In the Night we cannot enjoy the light of the Sun: accordingly when Death comes, as we cannot partake of the Comforts of this Life, so neither can we enjoy the Light of the Gospel, or the Sun of Righteousness, as now. If it be said, Good Christians do not, when Death comes, need the light they have rejoyced in, and walked by; that then they exchange their present light for that of Glory; that instead of seeing God in his Works, and in his Word, they view his Face in Heaven; they see the Blessed Jesus, the desire of Nations, and the delight of Holy Souls at the Right-hand of his Eternal Father. I answer, That this is indeed their Happiness; but how Miserable are others in their removal from the light of the Gospel! 'Tis their Sin that they will not now make use of it, when Death comes, it will be their misery that they cannot. Then
the

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the joyful Sound will not be to be heard ; none of the days of the Son of Man will be to be seen. It will be as impossible for them to have the *Sun of Righteousness* arise to them with *healing in his wings*, as it will be for them to fear Gods Name, which fits us for it.

1. Night confines us to our Houses, our Chambers, our Beds : suitably Death puts us under Confinement in the Grave. There they are confined, whose Ambition, in the time of their Lives, knew no bounds ; whom Kingdoms could not satisfie ; who if they could have been Masters of the World, would have complained of the narrowness of their borders. 'Tis Confinement of the Body only, which I am now speaking of ; the Souls of Wicked Men are put into worse Prisons. The Souls of the Righteous, when separated from the Body, go into glorious Liberty ; they flee away, and are at Rest ; they flee into Paradise, into *Abraham's Bosom*, and under the Wings of the Almighty. They shall indeed be united to the same Bodies Spiritualized ; but they shall never any more be clogged with their Carnal Bodies, or press'd down with the weight of Sin and Misery.

B

3. Night

3. Night is acceptable to the weary Traveller, to the industrious Labourer: in like manner Death is welcome to those who have faithfully served their Lord and Master, have been truly careful to do the Works of Him that sent them. The Night of Death must needs be acceptable to such, because of the Rest it brings them. *Blessed are the dead which dye in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.* They rest from the honest, yet painful Labours of their particular Callings; they rest from the Labours of our General Calling; from the labours of Repentance; from the troublesome, yet necessary works of Mortification and Self-denial. They need no longer to work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling. They will have no Enemies to oppose them, or to be opposed by them; they will have no *Lusts warring in their Members*; no fleshly *lusts* to be fought with, that *war against the Soul*.

They will particularly be at rest from all Disputes, Contentions, and Controversies, whether in Civil or Religious Matters; such as now divide,

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vide, and exercise, and perplex the Church and World, to the great grief of all that are truly Wise and Good.

*Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu Compressa quiescent.*

*Virg.
Georg. 4.
V. 86, 87.*

So *Virgil* observes concerning Bees; throw a little dust upon them, and that will part the Fray, end the Quarrel: so, when the dust of the Grave comes to be thrown upon us, all our Controversies will cease; and how well would it be, if that which Death must end, might to the comfort of our Lives be ended before! In short, they shall rest from all the Troubles of this World; nor may God's faithful Servants expect to be fully at rest from them till Death comes. The kind of their Affliction may be changed; but they shall be Afflicted still. The Seas they pass through may have different names, but they must look to be tossed in all of them. O happy Night which brings such rest! that ends our labours in the blessed comfort of a sweet Repose!

Rom. 2.
16.

4thly, and lastly, Night is succeeded by Day : accordingly Death by the Day of Judgment, the Day of the Lord ; the *Day when the Graves and the Books shall be opened*, and the Secrets of all Hearts disclosed ; when *God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel*. In a word, the day of final Redemption to all faithful and persevering Christians. After this shall follow one Everlasting Day ; a Day that shall last to all Eternity ; a Day which will need no Sun to enlighten it ; a Day which no Clouds will darken ; which no Storms will disturb ; a day which no Night shall follow. So much of the First Head propos'd to be Consider'd.

In the Second place, of the approach of this Night ; *The Night cometh*. Of this in the following particulars.

1. This Night will Come upon, will seize all. Some Dust may be finer, and some courser ; Some Bodies may be Cabinets of meaner, some of nobler, larger, sublimer Souls, and be better organized than others to receive them ; but all
Bodies

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Bodies shall return to the Earth, be dissolved or changed. All Sublunary things suffer something like Death, even such as promise longest continuance. Oak decays and rots; Marble will dissolve into dust.

Cum Licini marmora pulvis erunt.

*Marc. Ep.
l. 8. Ep. 3.*

Where is *Babylon* the Great? Where are the Carcasses of many once Flourishing Towns and Cities? As to Men, however they differ otherwise, they all agree in Death. The *Israelites* had in *Goshen* light in their dwellings, when the *Egyptians* were benighted with dreadful darkness; but this Night equally covers all, *Egyptians* and *Israelites* too.

1. For Bad Men; *Nimrod* the mighty hunter of Men, *Pharaoh*, *Sennacherib*, *Antiochus*, *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, *Julian*, and *Phocas*, and many others, Atheists, Tyrants, Apostates, and Hypocrites; whose names rot and stink, were long since turned into dust.

2. For Good Men; the first that ever died was Righteous *Abel*; *Abraham* the Friend of God;

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God; *David* the Man after Gods own heart; and *Hezekiah*, who walked before him in Truth and with a Perfect Heart, sleep in the Grave. The Red-Letters in the Kalender of the Church; the noble Army of Martyrs in St. *Ambrose's* Creed, shew that Righteousness does not deliver from Temporal Death. How vain and ar-

Just. Mar.
p. 76. Edit.
Par. 1636.

rogant was *Menander*, who, as we read in *Justin Martyr's* Apology to *Antoninus Pius* the Emperor, told his Disciples they should not dye! and how absurd was their folly, who would suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, and deluded!

St. John
8. 51.

But our Saviour, it may be said, has promised, *That if a Man keep his saying, he shall never see death.* I answer, That yet the most eminent of those, who have kept our Saviour's Saying, have seen Death as well as others; so that it is plain, our Saviour is not to be understood of Death that consists in the separation of the Soul from Body; but of that more terrible death, which consists in the everlasting separation of the Soul from God. This death none that keep our Saviour's Sayings shall see, or suffer; the other none may hope to be exempted

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exempted from ; For it is appointed for all Men once to dye by the Sovereign of all the World ; whose appointment no power can alter, no subtilty elude.

2. 'Tis uncertain when this Night will come. The *Israelites* knew, when they should be delivered out of the Land of *Egypt* ; God having promised to deliver them after Four Hundred Years. The same *Israelites* knew the term of their *Babylonish* Captivity ; God having prefix'd Seventy Years for it : but none know, when their Souls shall be brought out of bondage ; when they shall be deliver'd from captivity ; when they shall return to the heavenly *Canaan*, which flows with good Things far more desireable than the Milk and Honey the other was renown'd for. This is certain, that as the Labourers were called into the Vineyard, so Men are called out of the World at several hours of the day. Some dye in Infancy, look into the World, and lament their Misery and leave it. Others live a longer time, and raise a great expectation, which yet is soon disappointed ; or else do a great deal of good in a little time, and then leave those in Tears that loved them, and desir'd, and need-
ed

ed their longer stay. Some by violent courses break the Thread of their Lives before half their Days are spent; bring Night upon themselves before Noon. Some by the special blessing of God live long to give a good example, and to do much good in the World; others God, Righteous in his Judgments, suffers to continue, tho' they are the terrors and the scourges of those who are concern'd in them.

God has most wisely kept the knowledge of the time of our death from us, that we may always live in expectation of it, always be prepared for it; that, not knowing when the enemy will approach, we may be always upon the guard, always ready for the great encounter.

3dly, and lastly, We know not after what changes in our Day, our Night will come; how stormy or tempestuous our day may be. Many times, when the Morning is Fair and Clear, on the sudden Clouds arise, and Thunder and Storms follow. As it is in the Weather, so in the Course of our Lives: He that hath been the envy of others, on the sudden may be the object

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ject of their scorn or pity. That Spoke of the Wheel, as one of the distressed Princes, that help'd to draw proud King *Sesostri's* Chariot told him, which is now uppermost, is on the sudden nethermost again. We have seen and heard such strange alterations of Affairs in our time, that if we are not from them convinced of the uncertainty of the World, do not learn to be not *high-minded*, but to fear, we are very dull, ill proficients amidst the greatest opportunities.

I now proceed to the Third Head; The Incapacity which Death puts us under, *When no Man can work.*

By way of Illustration let me shew,

1. That when the Night of Death comes, no evil Works can be done; the Works of darkness are then at an end. Death will stop the Sinner in his mad Career; those Sinners, whom no Exhortations of God's Ministers, no Entreaties of Friends, no Mercies or Judgments of God could prevail with. But O miserable Men, who then cease to do evil, when they
C cannot

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cannot learn to do well; then end a bad life, when they cannot begin a good one; whose Sins are broken off by necessity, not by Repentance!

2. No good Works can be done, when the Night of Death comes.

Psalms 80.
10, 11.

1. No Works of Piety. *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the Dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction?* as the Psalmist speaks. *The grave cannot praise thee,* said

Isaiah 38.
18.

King *Hezekiah*, *Death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit, cannot hope for thy Truth.* When Death comes, there will be no opportunity of praising God, or of praying to him. We can exercise no Grace; we can neither Believe, nor Repent, nor Obey; we cannot lament past Errors, and Failings, and Sins; the neglect of God's Word, his Worship, and Service; whether neglected Atheistically, and Profanely; or Perversely, Scismatically, and Hypocritically. We cannot then work out our Salvation, or do any thing towards securing Heaven.

But

But when the Body lies in the Grave, may not the Soul act toward the advantage of both? I answer, No; The condition of those that are departed this Life is fixed and unalterable.

Hic vita aut amittitur, aut tenetur; as St. Cyprian in his Discourse to Demetrian speaks: In the moment of this life a happy Eternity is lost, or secured. And again, in his discourse of

St. Cyprian, Edit. Oxon. p. 196.

Mortality, *Ad refrigerium justi vocantur, ad supplicium rapiuntur injusti*: Good Men are called out of this World into a Comfortable Condition,

Idem de Mortal. p. 161.

Bad are snatched away into a State of Suffering. So that vain is their hope, who think of being purged and cleansed after this Life in order to being fitted for a better. To such may be apply'd the words of the Prophet Jonah,

They that observe lying Vanities, forsake their own Mercy; they hinder themselves of the benefit of those Mercies they might be happy in, if they would wisely lay hold upon present opportunities, and take the encouragement of the Golden Scepter now held forth to invite them.

Jonah 2. 8.

2. No Works of Justice can be done, when Death comes. Then the Robber, the Deceiver, the Slanderer will be beyond the opportunity of making or offering such Satisfaction, as they may make or offer in this World, and as they must, if they would enter into God's Heavenly Kingdom.

3. No Work of Charity can be done, when Death comes; then no Alms can be given, no Injuries forgiven; no Spiritual or Corporal Necessities relieved. Then we can neither do good Works our selves, nor provoke others to the doing of them. While we enjoy this Life, if we have the Grace to be Devout and Charitable, our Prayers and our Alms, like those of *Cornelius*, will go up, as a Memorial before God: but when Death comes, the ascent will not only be interrupted, but stopt; nothing of that odour of a sweet smell, which the Apostle speaks of, *Philip. 4. 18.* that Sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God, can come from the Grave.

Nor

Nor is there any need to prove that it is thus; that, when *the Night comes*, no *Man can Work* in this manner. View the Body when the Soul has forsaken it; look upon the pale Face; the sunk and closed Eyes; the hollow Cheeks; the Mouth that speaks not; the Hands that handle not; the Feet that walk not. Look upon the Body as it lies breathless, a lifeless Carcase; a cold lump of senseless Clay; and thence you will conclude, that when the Night of Death comes, it will be impossible for any one to Work.

Let me now address my self to you in a few words of Application.

1. In as much as the Night will come, when no Man can Work, and we know not how soon; nay, and the Day of Judgment will follow it, when we shall be called to an account of what we have done; let me expostulate with you in the words of the Householder in the Parable, *Why stand ye here all the day idle?* Do they believe, the
Night

Night will come, or that the Coming of it can be of any dreadful consequence to them; Do they believe that shortly there shall be no more time for them, who waste away their lives in Idleness and Sin? who spend their time in doing nothing, or that which is as bad as nothing, and frequently in that which is worse; in dishonouring God; in injuring their Neighbours; in wounding their own Consciences; and in destroying their own Souls? How dreadful will the Approach of the Night, and of the Day, I have been speaking of, be to such as these? If the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall such Ungodly Wretches, such Sinners appear? They shall appear, but in the greatest Horror and confusion before the dread Tribunal of our blessed Lord, and thence depart accursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

Once more Secondly, Let the Consideration of the Night, which will come, when *no Man can Work*, persuade us all, in this our Day, to look after the things which belong to our everlasting Peace; while we have opportunity,

ry, to do all the good we can; to make the best use of our Time we are capable of. Let us count that day lost in which we have not acted something to the Glory of God, or the Good of Man; in which we have not made some progress towards Heaven; set a step towards a blessed Eternity. Let not our time be taken up in little, unconcerning things; let the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, Faith; the great duties of the Gospel, be our chief and constant Care.

Remarkable was the Protestation with which H. Grotius.
an Eminent, well known Person is said to have us.
Concluded his life; 'That He would give all Fat.
' his Learning and Honour (and his share Warn. to a
' in both was large) for the plain Integri- Careless
' ty, and harmless Innocence of a devout World,
' poor Man, whom he mention'd, who spent Quarto. p.
' Eight hours of his Day in Prayer, Eight in La- 35, 36.
' bour, and but Eight in Sleep and other ne-
' cessaries.

'Tis *Conscientia bene actæ vitæ*, (in Tully's Phrase) De Senect.
the sense of a well spent life, which will be our p. 532.
Edit. Lon.
Comfort Fol.

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Comfort in old Age, when we are upon our Death-bed, at the Day of Judgment, and for Ever.

Upon the Occasion.

HAD I not been restrained by the Pleasure of the Honourable Personage ; whose Remains were lately deposited in this Place, from the mention of Her Name in a Funeral Sermon ; I hope, I should neither have flatter'd the Memory of the Dead, nor have fawn'd upon the Living ; For as the former would have been needless, as well as unjust ; so the latter would not have been endured ; as indeed it ought to be abhorr'd.

However, if I had been left to my liberty, I should have thought my self obliged to have proposed for imitation, an Example of Humility,

lity, Condescension, and Courtesy in High Birth and Quality. An Example of Humility, that scrupled not to enter the meanest Cottage, where Honest, Vertuous, Industrious Persons might be thought to dwell. An Example of Readiness to do any good Office, that was recommended or desir'd. An Example of a generous Mistress, of a Friendly and Obliging Neighbour; of a Wife Affectionate, far beyond the Common Rate; concern'd for every Interest of Her Husband. An Example of Prudent Charity, I may add Pious too; She having not only taken care, that the Poor Children of this Parish may be provided of Honest Callings in all succeeding times; but that they may have a sense of Religion; it being directed by Her Ladiship, That before they are put forth to Trades, they should be Examined, as to that, by the Minister.

An Example of remarkable Evenness of Temper in the Course of Life, and of great Patience under the Exercise of
D Sickneſs

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Sickness and Pain upon the Approach of Death.

An Example of a Serious Christian, who did not, as far as I can remember, in more than Seven Years omit one opportunity of receiving the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Supper; who in the time of Her Sickness with great readiness made profession of Her Faith, Her Repentance, and Charity; and in a most devout manner received the Absolution of the Church.

I must not Conclude without intreating You to consider, That seeing no appearance of Health, and firmness of Constitution is to be depended on; that seeing no Quality, no Advantages of the World; no Vertue, no Grace can secure from the Grave; that seeing no Skill, no diligence of Physicians; not the most exquisite Care of Relations can prevent Death; how much it Concerns us not to Trifle away any opportunity, any moment of our Lives; but on the contrary, to apply our selves with
the

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the greatest seriousness to that Holy and Heavenly Wisdom, whilst we live here, which may in the end bring us to Life Everlasting, through the Merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom with Thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be Glory both now and for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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and the North American Indians

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